CASE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Please go to the following URL to purchase your Leadership in Crisis: Ernest Shackleton and the Epic Voyage of the Endurance

The purpose of this case is for you to take the lessons learned and apply them to your every day work environment. You are to completely and fully answer each question; and support your answers from materials in your core program and outside sources.

I. Evaluating Shackleton as a Leader

1. In what context should the Endurance expedition be analyzed? As a scientific endeavor? An entrepreneurial venture? An exercise in imperial opportunity? By what criteria should the expedition be evaluated? Why?

   The Endurance expedition was an entrepreneurial venture disguised as a scientific endeavor. Shackleton’s desired to accomplish a feat that no one else had. He did not care much about the crew’s scientific ability. He only sought scientific credibility from the Royal Geographical Society for additional funding for the expedition. The race to the South Pole had already been won by the Norwegian Roald Amundsen, because of this England did not have the same interests as before Amundsen’s feat and did not provide sufficient backing to the Endurance expedition.

2. A managerial scholar has defined entrepreneurship as the “relentless pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled.” Using this definition, was Ernest Shackleton an entrepreneur? A leader? If so, why? If not, why not?

   Yes I do believe the Ernest Shackleton was not only an entrepreneur but also a leader in that area. I also believe that almost every entrepreneur is a leader of some sort. Many entrepreneurs are exploring a new territory. Many of them relentlessly pursue that opportunity because they want to be the first to get there just as Shackleton did. However if you look at the situation in a Shackleton also took into consideration his crew and what was best for them. Even though he had this goal in mind he knew that they were things that would keep him from reaching that goal. He could have taking that risk but he was a good leader first, he knew that he had to put the men first and do whatever it took to get them to safety.

3. What were the key features of the context in which he operated?

   Shackleton was actually motivated more by self-interest than by any other means, even though his mission was billed as a first for his country, his goal was to reclaim his status and fame that had been given to him by his previous successful adventure. The plan that he put together was ridiculed by his peers and was built on expectations that had never been accomplished before.
4. What role does fame play in entrepreneurial agency? What role does charisma play?

Shackleton’s fame grew after the Nimrod expedition, he became well known, and even received a knighthood for his accomplishment. This fame helped him in raising funds for the Endurance during a tough time prior to England entering World War I. The fame that Shackleton earned from his previous expeditions may have opened the doors to potential donors, but it was his charisma that secured the funds for the voyage.

5. Was Shackleton an audacious entrepreneur/leader? How important is audacity in understanding leadership action?

The definition of audacious is extremely bold or daring; recklessly brave; fearless: an audacious explorer. By this definition I would say yes Shackleton is very audacious. Without his audacity surely he and his crew would have died in the end. The definition of audacity is boldness or daring, especially with confident or arrogant disregard for personal safety, conventional thought, or other restrictions. However, if he didn’t have audacity they may have never take the trip to begin with.

6. How did Shackleton conceive of this expedition? What was at stake for him in putting the enterprise together?

Even though two previous explorers had already reached the South Pole. Shackleton conceived a plan to be the first to transverse the entire continent of the Antarctic. The two previous explorers both had difficulty in the return leg, by organizing a transcontinental expedition, Shackleton was planning on making the first successful round trip to the South Pole. If he was successful with his expedition, he would successfully place his name with the other explorers who had made it to the South Pole.

7. How do you evaluate Shackleton’s timing once he had marshaled the necessary resources?

Shackleton’s timing was poor. He was in a rush and did not allow his men to properly prepare. He did not allow time for the sled dogs to be trained, he left without a dog trainer, and he ignored the warnings of the local seamen to postpone the mission until the next year. He postponed the departure by one month.

8. Why does he appear to have been in such a hurry once the expedition was ready to set sail and Churchill had given him the go-ahead? Does this speed matter?

If Shackleton was in any bit of a hurry it was due to weather and perhaps the fact he was afraid someone else would beat him to the task of crossing the South Pole. Overall I would say speed for sure mattered when it came to this expedition. Simply because of the climate and how it would affect the men involved.
II. Evaluating Shackleton’s Effectiveness and Success

9. Was Shackleton effective?

To answer this question you have to decide what the desired outcome of the mission was. He was effective at leading his crew and providing them with exactly what was needed for their survival. He was not effective in achieving the goal of Transversing the Antarctic. In my opinion he was a successful leader, he went through extraordinary measures to ensure the survival of his crew, he even gave them the impression that he was weak so that they would not think they were the reason that they could not continue. He was effective in the survival of his crew.

10. How important is the quest for fame? Does that matter in evaluating Shackleton’s success?

Shackleton’s desire for fame was the reason behind this expedition. Without the chance of redeeming his reputation from the Nimrod expedition, the Endurance expedition would not have happened.

11. What were the underlying causes of the Endurance crisis?

The biggest underlying causes of the Endurance crisis would have been the weather and ice.

12. How important—to Shackleton’s effectiveness, to entrepreneurial/leadership effectiveness in general—is the ability to change course midstream?

The ability to improvise and to adjust to changes as they occur is a very valuable asset for any leader. In one of the leadership classes I have taken the statement was made that effective leaders need to thrive on change and uncertainty. It is the ability to thrive in these conditions that makes leaders effective. For this reason I say it is very important to all effectiveness to be able to change course midstream.

13. On balance, was Shackleton a good leader or a good manager?

Shackleton was a good leader. He did make some poor decisions in managing the expedition’s preparations, but he made good decisions in his hiring of the crew. He wanted optimistic men; he did not take much consideration into their scientific or sailing abilities. He knew that it would be a long and difficult journey and wanted the members of his crew to maintain a positive outlook. This helped him to keep the crew together through the disaster that the expedition became.

III. Evaluating Shackleton: Effectiveness and Success

14. What parallels do you see between Shackleton and other entrepreneurs or leaders whom you have studied? What were Shackleton’s strengths and weaknesses?

Shackleton is like many other entrepreneurs in the sense he is tenacious even when all hope seemed lost it was his relentless spirit and courage that kept him moving forward and allowed him to be a great leader that his crew could and did look up to.
Shackleton’s strengths were many, he was courageous, strong-willed, companionate, relentless, brave, daring, determined, and he was a great leader.

15. Why are people today so interested in Ernest Shackleton? Since the mid-to-late 1990s, why have there been so many books (business/general interest), movies, exhibits, and other projects about Shackleton?

I believe that the great lengths that he went through to ensure the survival of his crew is an example of the type of leadership that is valued today. We are looking for stories of the type where the best of mankind is displayed and that is what you see with Shackleton's story. The society today can be disheartening, looking back at the age of adventurism and finding the hero’s is one way of forgetting about the problems we have with our own lives today.

16. What did you personally learn from case? From your ReachHigher experience?

Ryan

Shackleton was able to keep everyone together while everything they had was falling about around them. He was a very good leader in this respect. He was able to keep the crew focused and alive. He was able to keep planning ahead, and he did have to change his plans numerous times. Throughout it all, he still had the crew with him. This case has almost every aspect of the Reach Higher experience involved in it, from problem solving to employee selection. The lesson that I learned from this case is that a leader who goes the extra mile for his crew can accomplish amazing things.

Larry

I believe that the thing I will take away from this case is the extraordinary commitment that Shackleton gave his crew. It shows the distance that leaders must travel to be successful. I am not saying that my job is life or death like Shackleton’s, but the level of commitment that is needed to be successful leader is similar. My Reach Higher experience has taught me to be more than a boss. I have learned techniques and lessons that I am using every day in my job. I know I have grown as a manager and believe that I have knowledge and skills to be a very effective leader. I know I am a better person and supervisor not than when I started the program two years ago.

Rebecca

This may sound cliché but Shackleton had a never leave a man behind mentality he was determined to make sure all his men made it home safely. I think one of the things that he did with the way he would arrange the men so they would feed from each other verse combat with each other. He knew people and how to help them be productive. His leadership showed his skills as a people person they respected him and his decisions. This is one of the skills I have found to be the most captivating to me in the Reach Higher program. I can say that I found this to be a skill that I have admired most in leadership I enjoy looking at people and find out what their dreams and skills
are and helping them work that into a job they have or are applying for. I feel that this program has allowed me to better my skills of understanding people as well as myself.

**Karyn**

Shackleton’s leadership skills varied from effective and ineffective, he also demonstrated some impulsive leadership skills as well. Though being warned early on to wait, he decided to go on the expedition anyway which may have lead to him underestimating the situation. He planned ahead and played close attention to keeping his crewmembers nourished so that could remain healthy during the expedition. But he did not prepare his team for unforeseen circumstances that could occur if they had to abandon the ship.

He used his organizational skills to recruit and build a team; he trained them, used strategies to solve problems and encouraged healthy working relationships. He had a vision and a mission, when faced with a crisis he kept his crew engaged in their responsibilities in order to keep them on track of their mission. As a leader it is important to gain respect, admiration and trust from your employees. Shackleton established that with his crew early on, which lead to them being confident in following his leadership. When faced with resistance from his crew to keep marching he used a reward system to motivate his crew. As a leader he displayed kindness, patience and perseverance throughout his expedition.